

**Governor's Commission on Family Farms**  
**January 26, 2000**  
**Berry Hill Mansion, Frankfort**  
**10 AM EST**

**Members present:** Jim Naive, Chairman; Bill Atkins; Alice Baesler; Ron Catchen; John-Mark Hack; Don Halcomb; Mark Haney; Susan Harkins; Rita Jones representing Hampton "Hoppy" Henton; Sylvia Lovely; Mattie Mack; Luther Mason; Al Pedigo; Stephen Price; William Brandon Reed; Secretary Allen Rose; Mike Stivers, representing Commissioner Billy Ray Smith, and Bob Sparks.

**Absent were:** Karen Armstrong-Cummings; John Berry; Sharon Furches; Denise Hoffman; Paul Hornback; Janet Johnson; David Kash; Chris Kummer; Ken Mattingly; and John Medley Jr.

**Chairman Naive called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.**

The Chairman welcomed Commission members and guests to the meeting.

Don Halcomb gave an update from the National Pork Producers Council and what was being done to increase pork supply.

Steve Price advised that the primary legislative focus of the Aquaculture Council supporting legislation that would give Kentucky products priority with state institutions. He asked that the Commission also support this legislation.

Sylvia Lovely distributed the "Gaines Report." This is a detailed report suggesting that a viable alternative albeit nontraditional crop for Kentucky could be horse farms. Not thoroughbred horses, but work horses, pleasure horses, nurse mares, miniatures, etc. Sylvia requested that Commission members review the report and invite Mr. Gaines to speak to the group at a later date. There was discussion on the feasibility of such a plan. Chairman Naive asked that Mr. Gaines be contacted and asked to speak at the next Commission meeting.

Alice Baesler reported on the Migrant Labor Task Force's actions. She advised that they are working in congress to secure amnesty for workers if they meet certain criteria. This would enable them to obtain a green card and later apply for citizenship. On another subject, the papers have recently reported cases of illegal migrant workers being arrested. She spoke with Shelbyville INS. Ms. Baesler was assured that any arrests have been complaint driven. Farmers are not being harassed.

Ms. Baesler reminded everyone of the Migrant Worker's Conference on 4/25.

Positive responses regarding the Women in Agriculture Conference are still coming in. As a result of that Conference, Ms. Baesler has been speaking to women's groups around the state. She expects next year's conference to be even bigger and better.

Jim Naïve asked the Commission members to discuss priorities for the Commission:

- Entrepreneur Center
- Urban/Rural Partnerships
- Education
- Migrant Labor Task Force

Don Halcomb advised that it would be a mistake to respond to every headline. Identify the most pressing issues and focus on them.

Alice stated that immediate aid to farmers should be a priority. Many farmers are calling begging for assistance. Others agreed.

Chairman Naïve reiterated the importance of using the Phase I money to establish agriculture programs that would help the farmer diversify. Tobacco is on its way out, must have a replacement.

Alice Baesler made the point that such plans would take time. Farmers are in immediate crisis. Many will lose their farms if they don't find help, especially the young farmer. Have to find a way to get low interest loans.

The Commission members discussed what could be done to assist the farmer at this moment. Many ideas were floated such as, giving the farmer food stamps and medical cards, funneling money to the middle-income farmer that isn't sinking but maintaining income level, but most suggestions were giving farmers loans of one type or another.

Mark Haney posed the question "Are we doing the young farmer a favor by getting him so far into debt that he may never catch up? Would it be better for them to go out of business?"

It was suggested that the state give loans against the future payments of Phase II settlement funds. John-Mark advised that the state is not in the banking business. Most farmers are in crisis because they were lulled into a false sense of security by the tobacco program and did not plan for their future. He further stated that there are many programs out there that would aid the farmer in diversification, financial assistance, etc. but that many won't put forth the effort to find out what's available. He suggested that the Commission on Family Farms nor the state are in the business of saving bad businesses, whether they are farms or others.

John-Mark Hack gave an update on the Governor's plan for Phase I monies. A copy of Governor Patton's proposal "CommonWealth Grows" is on file in the Commission's meeting folder located in the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy.

Bill Atkins asked how could we be more effective in getting the word out to the farmers? John-Mark advised that everything has been published...farmers should take the initiative to find out for themselves. Sylvia Lovely stated that we've raised awareness with farmers as much as possible. Agriculture groups should work harder to educate their people. Consideration should be given to targeting other groups such as schools etc.

Al Pedigo stated that this was depressing, that even Commission members (with the exception of Alice Baesler) didn't make their living raising tobacco. He stated that the Commission hasn't really addressed marketing issues. In his opinion, few farmers would make the effort to contact the Center for Entrepreneurship. His concern about diversification is that tobacco farmers would be completely left out of those capital dollars. Al stated that imports of foreign cigarettes were ruining the tobacco industry. John-Mark Hack disagreed. He pointed out that the only decrease in the tobacco industry has been the Tobacco Companies decrease in the purchase of US tobacco. The Companies set up the American tobacco farmers for failure.

Alice Baesler advised that there was a significant demand for organically grown tobacco, and that it was selling for as much as \$3 per pound.

There was some discussion about contract growing for the companies.

Sylvia states that Urban/Rural development is a "now" opportunity to get money back into the farmer's hands. Her subcommittee is currently focusing on two ideas:

- 1) Establishing farmers markets in cities, which will include reviewing regulations and laws that would prohibit these markets, setting up tours of the markets for restaurant owners, grocers, etc, and hosting annual farm city/farm conferences at the markets; and
- 2) Encourage school/farm interaction, i.e. school children plan their own menus and go to the farm and select the food products.

Secretary Rose discussed the advantages of forming business/agricultural consortia. He offered to bring Commissioner Emil Jezik before the Commission to discuss this idea in detail. Ron Catchen agreed with Secretary Rose and encouraged Chairman Naïve to have Commissioner Jezik make a presentation at the next meeting.

The meeting was recessed for lunch.

Paula Weglarz with Historic Properties gave a brief history of the Berry Hill Mansion and Juniper Hills Estate.

Ron Catchen reviewed the Education Subcommittee's outline.

There was discussion about a "Rapid Adjustment Team" which would go into areas of crisis identify immediate needs and work with those in need. The discussion raised many questions such as: who would be on the team? how would crisis be defined? Etc. Susan Harkins advised that was the purpose of the consortia. There was additional discussion.

Chairman Naïve asked Ron to flesh this out with his subcommittee and report back at the next Commission meeting.

Ron asked for additional members on the Education Subcommittee. John-Mark advised that Joel Neaveill would serve on the subcommittee. Alice Baesler volunteered to serve.

The next meeting of the Commission on Family Farms will be on March 8, at the Berry Hill Mansion.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.